

BULLETIN OF
THE NEW YORK ACADEMY
OF MEDICINE



MARCH 1950

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT
OF THE ACADEMY*

BENJAMIN P. WATSON

It is traditional and fitting that your President at the end of his first year of office submit a resume of the work undertaken and the results achieved during that time. I shall touch only upon the highlights, leaving the details to be recorded in the annual report, which will be published and distributed later.

For me the past year has been one of sustained interest and enlightenment. After forty years spent in active practice, in administration and in teaching I was inclined to think that there was little more that I could learn. In this I was mistaken for, through attendance at the meetings of our various committees and in participating in the other activities of the Academy, I have come to realize that my education has only just begun. I now understand why, since 1859, the President has been elected for a two years' term. To use the old nautical analogy his first year is spent in learning the ropes; so that in his second he may be able to take some part in the sailing and navigation of the ship. That is my ambition for the coming year.

How The New York Academy of Medicine has evolved, what it has stood for, the role that it has played in the advancement and dis-

* Read January 5, 1950 at the Annual Meeting of The New York Academy of Medicine.

semination of knowledge, its services to the profession and to the public are all set forth in precise and interesting detail in the volume published last year by the Columbia University Press, under the title "The New York Academy of Medicine, Its First Hundred Years." The author, as you know, is Dr. Philip Van Ingen. We the present Fellows and those of succeeding generations will ever be under a deep debt of gratitude to him for the meticulous care with which he has compiled and presented the record—a labor of love which has resulted in a valuable historical document.

From it we learn that in the year 1847, when the Academy came into being, "Dr. Isaac Wood—officially founded the Library by presenting a copy of 'Paines Commentaries' in three volumes." From this very small beginning the library has grown till it now has taken its place as one of the two great research libraries for the medical profession in this country, the other being the Army Medical Library in Washington. In the past year it has been visited by over 45,000 readers not all of them doctors of medicine, for as Miss Doe stated in a report to the Library Committee, they included practically "a cross section of the population; doctors of philosophy, of law and of divinity; hospital staffs of all grades, professional, nursing, technicians and building; medical school faculties and students; representatives of allied professions of dentistry, pharmacy, psychology, podiatry, cosmetology; publicity writers for the selling and advertising of medical products; bibliographical researchers in medicine and allied fields; abstractors, free lancers and paid writers; in the general field, writers for newspapers, magazines, theatre, movies, radio and television; and lastly the large section of the laity who come to read up on their own ailments. All of these and many others rely constantly upon the resources of the Academy Library."

To cater to this demand and to cope with cataloging and bibliographic research and all the other activities necessary for a library of 262,000 volumes requires a large well-trained staff. It now numbers forty-six and should be added to. The physical space required for housing the books has more than reached its limits so that we are confronted with a major construction problem which must be faced in the near future. Expenditures for the Library total more than 36 per cent of the whole Academy budget and increase year by year. We are in urgent need of further endowment and gifts. If the services which the

Library renders to the professions, to industry and to the public were more fully known we might look forward to increased support. Our individual Fellows can do much in this regard through their daily contacts.

We gratefully acknowledge gifts from friends of the Rare Book Room which have enhanced the value of the Historical Collection. We are indebted to the New York Public Library for sending us 20,000 volumes. After careful screening we were able to send 12,000 of these to the Southwestern Medical School. We also donated 30,000 volumes to the University of Chile Medical School whose library had been destroyed by fire. The Council in the past year enlarged the Committee on Library from nine to eighteen members with the idea that they would subdivide into small subcommittees each specially interested in one phase of library activity. The Committee is now functioning in that way.

It was with the utmost regret that early in the year, the Council acceded to the request of Dr. Archibald Malloch that he be relieved of his duties as Librarian, a post he had held since 1925. When he took office twenty-five years ago the Library contained 135,000 volumes; it now, as I have mentioned, contains 262,000; its staff then numbered 10, it is now 46. In addition to his work of organizing and taking care of this rapid expansion, Dr. Malloch found time to engage in historical research, to stimulate interest in the Rare Book Room and to prepare and give addresses to interested groups here and abroad; some of them were subsequently published. In recognition of his scholarship and of his outstanding services the Academy has conferred upon him the title of Librarian Emeritus. We wish him well in his retirement.

After a thorough canvass of the library field the Council appointed Miss Janet Doe as Dr. Malloch's successor. A member of the staff for many years, Miss Doe brings to her work a thorough knowledge of every detail of the Academy Library, which is a most valuable asset. That in addition she is a scholar thoroughly versed in medical literature and in library techniques is evidenced by the fact that she is a past President of the American Medical Library Association. We feel sure that Miss Doe working with the Library Committee will not only maintain but will continue to enhance the high standing of the Library, our greatest asset.

The important role which The New York Academy of Medicine

continues to play in the field of medical education is evidenced by the fact that in the past year over five hundred meetings were organized and held in this building. Excluding the Sectional Meetings and taking only three of the regular series, Stated Meetings, Friday Afternoon Lectures and Graduate Fortnight there was an attendance of 11,485. This speaks well for the quality of the programmes presented.

I should like to single out for special mention the Graduate Fortnight which dealt with "Advances in Diagnostic Methods." The programme consisted of twenty evening lectures, four morning panel discussions, and twenty afternoon hospital clinics. The Scientific Exhibit was of outstanding merit, including as it did every method of demonstration, including television. It is a continuing regret that exigencies of space necessitated the dismantling of such a display at the end of two weeks.

While it is the Committee on Medical Education which is responsible for most of the educational programmes, two other standing committees, Medical Information and Public Health Relations, also take a part. The former sponsors the Laity Lectures which continue to attract large attendances here and a still larger radio audience.

The success of the broadcasting of these Laity Lectures over the Station WNYC which undertakes and underwrites it as a public service has encouraged the Committee on Medical Information to investigate the possibilities of having tape recordings made of the more important of the scientific papers presented here, so that later they might be broadcast over FM and thus be made available to any doctor or group of doctors who have FM sets and care to listen in. A good deal of detail has yet to be worked out regarding the actual broadcasting, but already some tape recordings are being made. There may be more to report on this subject in the coming year.

The Committee on Medical Information also sponsors an annual Eastern States Health Education Conference. Last year the subject under discussion was "The Social and Biological Challenge of the Aging Population" in which a very notable group of men and women took part. Gerontology is a subject of ever-increasing and widening interest and it is hoped that in the near future the papers and discussions presented at this meeting will be published in book form. It will make a most interesting volume.

The Committee on Public Health Relations in coöperation with the New York Association of Oxygen and Ambulance Services sponsored

a symposium and exhibit on Inhalational Therapy. This was a follow-up on the pioneer efforts of the Committee in 1930 to standardize oxygen therapy and equipment. These standards were revised in 1936 and again in 1943. In December 1949 five evening sessions and one afternoon session were devoted to the discussion of the application of various forms of inhalational therapy in an ever-widening group of conditions. The symposium was an outstanding success attracting large audiences and should do much to promote the wise use of this therapeutic measure.

For the first time in the history of The New York Academy of Medicine it took part in an open meeting and discussion with members of the profession of Law. The occasion was a symposium or, as the lawyers seem to prefer to call it, a colloquium on "Law, Medicine and the Unstable Family." The sponsoring law group working with our Committee on Medical Information was The New York County Lawyers Association. The proceedings of this conference have been published and so made available to the public.

There are many aspects of human relations where Law and Medicine approach each other or overlap. With this beginning made we are encouraged to look forward to further meetings for the discussion of matters bearing upon human welfare. One such problem, the care of chronic alcoholics, was explored jointly by the Committee on Public Health Relations of the Academy and the Committee on Medical Jurisprudence of the Association of the Bar of New York City. A comprehensive plan was worked out and incorporated in a bill which was introduced in both houses of legislature. Although the bill failed of passage it has aroused a great deal of interest and there are hopes that after further discussions with the State Health Department, the State Department of Mental Hygiene, the State Department of Social Welfare and the Committee on Alcoholism of the Medical Society of the State of New York, a bill will be presented and enacted which will make provision for the treatment and rehabilitation of the victims of this disease.

The Committee on Public Health Relations spent considerable time and conferred with the State officials concerned with mental health and with the Governor on the subject of providing care for psychiatric patients in general hospitals, as an alternative to the enlarging of our already enormous institutions for the insane. This point of view is now receiving sympathetic consideration in official quarters.

There was published in the September issue of the Academy *Bulletin* a Report by the Committee on Public Health Relations on Hospitalization of Veterans. The Report consists of a careful review of the growth and development of Veterans Hospitals from the time of World War I and of the policies which have been established and followed by the Veterans Administration up to the present. It is frankly critical of many of these policies and makes far reaching recommendations for their modification; among others that there is no need for the contemplated further expansion of hospital beds provided that patients with non-service-connected disabilities be admitted in just sufficient numbers as to provide an adequate training program for the professional personnel; that the means test should be more strictly applied; that there should be better integration with existing civilian and other governmental hospitals. In these and in other recommendations the Report is in complete accord with the findings of the Committee on Federal Medical Services (The Voorhees Committee) of the Hoover Commission. The problem of the medical care of veterans is a matter of vital importance, not alone to the medical profession but to every citizen and taxpayer. It requires our constant vigilance and scrutiny.

A study on Infant Mortality is being conducted by the Committee on Public Health Relations. Last year a complete survey of provisions for maternal and infant care in all the hospitals in New York City was made. The work of tabulation and interpretation has now begun and will be the subject of a report in the near future. Meanwhile the Committee has formulated plans for making a detailed analysis of all infant deaths during the coming year along much the same lines as were followed in the maternal mortality study made by the Academy and published in 1933.

I can mention only by title some of the other studies made and activities engaged in by the Committee on Public Health Relations: Animal experimentation in relation to the procuring and care of animals; provision of clinics for patients with Mediterranean and sickle cell anemias; training of practical nurses—all worked on in conjunction with the organizations directly involved.

The Medical Information Bureau has answered close to ten thousand inquiries of various kinds during the year; has reviewed sixty-eight manuscripts and arranged for the publication of three new volumes and the revision and republication of three others. It has prepared or has

acted as the clearing house for 49 press releases and is largely responsible for the receptivity of the press to our statements.

The Bureau of Medical Education in addition to arranging the various scientific and sectional meetings has been responsible for the publication of the monthly *BULLETIN* and for the editing and publication of a volume entitled "Trends in Medical Education," being the proceedings of an Institute on Medical Education held in 1947 in connection with the centenary observances. Other notable publications are two embodying the work presented at the Section on Microbiology, "Diagnosis of Viral and Rickettsial Infections" edited by Dr. Frank L. Horsfall and "Evaluation of Chemo-therapeutic Agents" edited by Dr. Colin MacLeod. A third volume just published by the Commonwealth Fund entitled "Ecology of Health" embodies the ideas presented at the Institute on Public Health held as part of the Centennial Celebration. We are indebted to the Commonwealth Fund and to the Columbia University Press for their coöperation in the publication of these volumes.

The Committee on Medicine and the Changing Order continues to keep a watchful eye on the various proposals for voluntary and compulsory health insurance. It has had the benefit of hearing directly from Fellows and from visitors from abroad their observations on how the compulsory plan is working in Britain. The report of Dr. Willard C. Rappleye was particularly enlightening. So far the Committee has seen no reason to depart in principle from the conclusions stated in the volume, "Medicine in the Changing Order," published in 1947. These principles were again set forth by Dr. George Baehr at a Senate Committee Hearing to which the Academy was invited.

It will be gathered from this short recital that it is in the Standing Committees that most of the constructive work of the Academy is done. On behalf of the whole Fellowship I take this opportunity to thank the chairmen and members of these committees for the time they have given and for the knowledge and wisdom they have brought to bear upon the problems presented. Upon the Executive Secretaries of these committees falls the burden of effectuating policies and carrying out the details whilst at the same time directing the day to day work of their bureaus. In Drs. E. H. L. Corwin, Mahlon Ashford, and Iago Galdston, we have three men of outstanding ability, each with years of experience behind him and each an acknowledged authority in his field. The New York Academy of Medicine is much beholden to them.

This is not the time or place to present a detailed financial statement—that is in the course of preparation—and will be found in the annual report, but I should like to tell you that in the past year we appeared to have lived within our income. In approximate figures that income amounted to \$420,000 and expenditure to \$416,000. Income is derived from interest in invested funds, from Foundations, individual gifts and the annual subscriptions from Fellows. If we had to depend entirely upon the last item the levy for each Fellow of the Academy would be in excess of two hundred dollars a year. Present dues cover just a little more than half of the expenses of the Library alone.

Endowment funds amount to more than five million dollars. They should be increased to give a greater income yield for taking care of mounting running expenses and necessary expansion. In order to achieve the present balanced budget all sorts of economies and restriction of activities, especially in the Library, have been necessary. Another million dollars is urgently required to enable the Academy to give to the profession and to the public all the services it is capable of rendering.

The Board of Trustees under the chairmanship of Dr. Orrin S. Wightman with Dr. Shepard Krech as treasurer and chairman of its Finance Committee devotes much time and thought to the husbanding of our resources. On your behalf I pay tribute to their sound financial judgment and to the able administration of the Comptroller, Mr. Arthur A. Eberle.

With the Council rests the determination of the over-all policies and activities of the Academy; these are carried into effect by the Director Dr. Howard Reid Craig. In the few years during which he has held office Dr. Craig has acquired a unique knowledge and understanding of all our affairs. An able executive, he has the gift of getting the best out of and inspiring loyalty in those with whom he works. He has been largely instrumental in converting our annual deficit into a surplus in the last two years. A man of wide culture, he makes easy contact with people in all walks of life and interests them in our organization. He has made the presidential path an easy and enjoyable one for me to tread. I thank him.

We enter upon the New Year with many of the programmes already planned, some of them in detail. These give promise that The New York Academy of Medicine will continue to play its part in the furtherance of Medical knowledge and its dissemination to the profession and to the community.